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## Letters to the Editor

## Paraphilias and sexual offences in the Bible

Dear Sir,

Aggrawal has written an excellent account of paraphilias and sexual crimes in the Bible.<sup>1</sup> However, there are two more incidents he might have included.

(1) *Gang rape*. Two angels come to S'dom to warn Lot that his city is to be destroyed.<sup>2</sup> He meets them and offers them hospitality. The men of the city hear of this, and surround the house to demand that they be brought out "so that we may know them". Driven by the Hebrew laws of hospitality, Lot goes out and offers his two virgin daughters in exchange. Before the men can break in, the angels pull Lot indoors, and strike blind the potential rapists. This is the ultimate wickedness, which causes S'dom to be destroyed, while Lot and his family are saved.

(2) *Incest (and entrapment)*. Judah, son of Jacob, has three sons, Er, Onan, and Shelah.<sup>3</sup> Er takes Tamar as a wife, but dies without an heir. Onan is required to enter into a Levirate marriage, to ensure Tamar's survival in an age without Social Security. However, he refuses, and dies. Shelah is young, and Judah asks Tamar to wait, lest his third son die. He forgets his promise, and, years later, Tamar sets herself up as a prostitute to entrap Judah on his way from the celebrations at the time of the sheep-sheering. Judah makes

his daughter-in-law pregnant. When this becomes known, he orders that she be burnt for harlotry. Tamar reminds him that he is the father of her twins, and that he has forgotten his promise to give her to Shelah, his third son, so that Judah declares that "She is more righteous than I".

Curiously, Tamar is a very popular name for Jewish children today, despite such infamous origins.

## Conflict of Interest

I have no conflicts of interest, other than interests in Clinical Forensic Medicine and the Bible.

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<sup>1</sup> Aggrawal A. References to the paraphilias and sexual crimes in the Bible. *J Forensic Legal Med*;16(3):109–14.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis XIX, 1–11.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis XXXVIII, 1–26.

## How much do Hong Kong emergency physicians know about common legal situations?

Dear Editor,

The emergency department is often the first place where victims of accidents and violence and patients with medical emergencies seek help in our healthcare system: the spectrum ranges from life-threatening conditions to minor injuries, from the newborn to the elderly.

Wong et al. found that all emergency physicians have some experience in writing medical reports with medico-legal significance.<sup>1</sup> Nearly all fellows of the Hong Kong College of Emergency Medicine (HKCEM) and three quarters of non-fellow emergency physicians (usually trainee doctors) had given evidence in courts of law, at the request of the police, defence counsel or prosecutors. Respondents were less comfortable in areas like homicide, child abuse and sexual assault. However, most respondents relied on 'on-the-job' coaching by senior medical staff to handle these prob-

lems. It is therefore important for them to be aware and understand the relevant statutes and common medico-legal principles and practice, particularly in the current increasingly litigious climate.

We conducted an electronic survey among HKCEM fellows and trainees in December 2008 to identify emergency physicians' level of legal knowledge in relation to common legal situations in the emergency department and to determine if experience and training improves knowledge. The questionnaire consisted of 15 statements covering different topics including Bolam principles, International Health Regulation (as promulgated by local statute), consent, mental health management and employment issues. As Hong Kong practices common law despite being a part of People's Republic of China after 1997, the principles which operate in the common law world still apply in Hong Kong.

Questionnaires were completed by 63/434 doctors (15%): 36 fellows and 27 trainees. Most doctors (60/63) work in the public sector. A quarter of trainees and surprisingly most (87%) fellows were not aware of the Bolam test for a doctor's professional